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Library post.

LIBRARIES AND THE POST OFFICE.

In connection with the equalization of educational advantages in New England the question of equal library privileges has been raised, for the public library is an important educational agency. To equalize library privileges by a more comprehensive library system would, therefore, be a help to more equal educational opportunities. The library condition in New England may be illustrated by the statement that more than half the towns of Connecticut and Vermont have no public libraries, and while all Massachusetts towns, except seven, have such libraries, they differ greatly in extent. It is believed a carrier system, such as is given to private publishers in the postal system, would do much to diffuse library privileges in New England and in all parts of our country. The following memorandum and note were submitted to about two hundred persons in the United States, including librarians, educational leaders, postmasters, public men, editors and prominent business men. They were also submitted to representatives of Canada, Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Many favorable replies were received. An address on the subject was presented at the American Library Association meeting at Atlanta, Ga., on May 11, which was printed in the *Boston Transcript* of May 13. The memorandum and note were as follows:

MEMORANDUM ON LIBRARIES AND POST OFFICE.

ADMISSION OF PUBLIC AND INCORPORATED LIBRARIES
AS SECOND CLASS MAIL MATTER, ONE CENT
PER POUND—STATEMENT OF REASONS.

1. It is in harmony with the spirit of the postal laws to diffuse good reading and to promote the circulation of literary, scientific and other publications which tend to public enlightenment. The public library is a leading agency in this line. Both library and post office should work together.

2. The spread of library advantages is intimately connected with popular education, which the general, state and local governments have from the first promoted in a liberal manner and in many ways.

3. The people who maintain public libraries mostly under state laws and by direct taxation are the same who maintain the postal system under national laws. By thus using the postal system they simply become their own carriers and grant to themselves the same privileges which they give to private publishers.

4. Matter now carried at second postage, or, in certain cases, carried free, is not supposed to have a superior, if it has an equal, claim to such rating compared with the public library which has so direct a bearing on the public welfare as to justify a tax for its support.

5. Such provision will promote the circulation of books everywhere, especially in regions where no libraries exist, as well as at library centres, to a greater degree than can otherwise be secured. It will tend to the founding of more public libraries and to develop a library system which shall reach every family and individual.

6. If for economic reasons it is necessary, a shorter carriage might be granted, as for example, 100 or 200 miles, thus giving access over a considerable area to central libraries.

7. This modification of postal laws would put in right relations two important public interests, the post office and the public library, which in the past have been unrelated to the detriment of libraries and, possibly, to the pecuniary loss of the post office.

Dear Sir:—Your attention is respectfully asked to the inclosed memorandum and your views thereon are solicited.

Public libraries have generally been started by towns and cities with some help from the state. They are usually local. Many think the local idea will in time be modified by a larger unit of administration and support, by creating comprehensive library districts, by making cities or central libraries serve a larger area with proper system of branches and deliveries or similar methods.

By using the post office system for distribution and the readjustment of library administration somewhat, it seems each post office might be like a branch library, and to get a book from the public library would be as easy as to get a letter from the mail.

Users of libraries will appreciate the need of improving present conditions of circulation of books. Many localities can scarcely hope to have library advantages unless by better distribution from central libraries. More than half the towns of Connecticut and Vermont, for example, have no public or free library. The same is the case in many parts of our country.

Some libraries founded by philanthropists or associations are not local, but admit to use of books persons at a distance. In such cases present mail rates are so large as to be prohibitive. By giving to public and incorporated libraries the rates given to publishers, namely, one cent per pound, the circulation of such libraries would be much facilitated.

Any views or suggestions from you will be highly valued.

Signed,

Secretary.

A few extracts from replies are herewith given.

A. H. Chase, state librarian, Concord, N. H.:

"I am in entire sympathy with the movement outlined. We now loan books quite largely around the state from this library, sending them by express. Were it possible to send them by mail at one cent a pound, we should have our hands full to keep up with the demand, and this is just what we wish to see. Anything I can do to help this matter along I shall be very glad to do."

Rev. G. A. Jackson, General Theological Library, Boston, Mass.:

"Our library is in the heartiest sympathy with the movement to obtain better postal rates for library books. I shall not need to assure you of it when you know we are just now inaugurating a movement by which our books are to go out to ministers all over the state. . . . The express rates are high, and act as something of a brake upon the working of our plan, so that we shall hold up both hands in favor of the request upon the postal department."

A. E. Bostwick, Public Library, Brooklyn, N. Y.:

"It seems to me the matter is a practical one, and one that would be greatly for the advantage of the public."

E. H. Anderson, Carnegie Library, Pittsburg, Pa.:

"I have long thought it would be a good thing for the educational interests of this country if we had a cheap book post."

F. M. Crunden, Public Library, St. Louis, Mo.:

"I take pleasure in indorsing these views on the admission of public and incorporated libraries as second-class mail matter."

Hon. M. S. Stone, state secretary of education, Montpelier, Vt.:

"Most heartily do I indorse the memorandum on libraries and post office."

E. B. Andrews, superintendent of schools, Chicago, Ill.:

"I am much impressed with the fertility of the library idea, and hope you will push it into operation. Shall be glad to have any reports of its operation or attempts to work it."

W. S. Chaplin, chancellor of Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.:

"I think something might be done in this way, especially in our western communities, where libraries are few and distances great."

Hon. John Wanamaker, ex-postmaster general, Philadelphia, Pa.:

"If personally I have any influence I shall be glad to exert it in favor of amending the postal laws to aid in the enlargement of public free libraries."

Hon. C. M. Depew, United States senator, New York City:

"I have read the proposed scheme for making public libraries more accessible in the country, and it seems to me to possess a great deal of merit."

Hon. J. H. Walker, ex-United States representative, Worcester, Mass.:

"I am of the opinion that books from libraries within a radius, say, of one hundred miles, should be sent and returned at the very lowest rate charged upon any matter that is distributed through the mail. I do not believe they should be sent absolutely free, because that would have a tendency to discourage the establishment of local libraries."

Hon. B. R. Tillman, United States senator, Trenton, S. C.:

"I think I would support such a provision in the post office appropriation"

G. T. Winston, president of University of Texas, Austin, Texas:

"I am heartily in sympathy with the movement to carry public and incorporated libraries to the people through the agency of the mails, and to admit books for this purpose as second-class mail matter."

J. C. Rowell, librarian of University of California, Berkeley, Cal.:

"We approve any movement in favor of amending the postal laws for this specific purpose."

W. A. Strong, mayor of Portland, Oregon:

"I trust efforts in this line will be successful."

T. R. Rogers, governor of Washington, Olympia, Wash.:

"If the right kind of books can be circulated . . . I believe great good would be done. . . . If these things were kept in view (good books) I could heartily indorse the circulation of books by mail."

One foreign letter is given, an extract from the minister of the Netherlands:

"In the Netherlands books may go from libraries of any kind by mail at book or parcel rates, and the postman delivers the printed matter or parcel (without extra charge) at the door of the addressee, even in the most remote rural parts of the kingdom."

The weight of the letters is in favor of a postal carrier system for libraries at second postage rates, or cost.

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